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AMERICAN
ECONOMY

U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
www.dot.gov/affairs/briefing.htm

News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, August 26, 2008

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FHWA 18-08

U.S. Department of Transportation Approves Utah's I-15 Corridor

WASHINGTON - Utah's plans to build the I-15 Corridor in Utah County can now move forward, U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters announced today.

Last Friday, Federal Highway Administration officials signed a "Record of Decision" (ROD) - a document representing the final clearance of the project's exhaustive environmental review - giving the state clearance to begin right-of-way acquisition, design and construction.

"This marks a major milestone for the region's thousands of drivers anxious for relief from traffic tie-ups," said Secretary Peters.

The project, part of an 840-mile route connecting San Diego, Calif., to Salt Lake City that was chosen last year as one of six "Corridors of the Future" by the U.S. DOT has long been a priority of the Federal Highway Administration and the Utah Department of Transportation.

"Residents of growing communities in Utah and southern Salt Lake counties are eager for more transportation capacity to ease trips to and from work, school and home. Among the several projects to add roadway and transit options for travelers in the region, this I-15 expansion is critical. It's good to see the effort moving along," said U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah).

"Today's announcement is a tremendous step toward meeting Utah's transportation challenges. As many Utah counties experience growing pains, transit projects, such as the completion of the I-15 corridor, will help ease traffic congestion on roads and improve the safety of motorists. I applaud DOT for recognizing the critical transportation needs of our state," said U.S. Senator Bob Bennett (R-Utah).

While the environmental review process for a project this size typically takes seven to eight years, the review for this project was completed in less than four, the Secretary noted. The project's current environmental review began with the publication of its "notice of intent" in the Federal Register on Sept. 2, 2004.

"The savings in time achieved on this project so far underscores the benefits of the President's environmental streamlining process," said FHWA Administrator Tom Madison. "The real beneficiaries of this improvement are the thousands of drivers who will see relief from traffic congestion sooner rather than later."

The I-15 project, which includes widening and reconstruction of 43 miles of highway with 22 interchanges, extends north from the South Payson interchange in Utah County to 123rd South Interchange in Salt Lake County. When completed, the project will relieve area traffic congestion and improve safety. A locally funded commuter rail project is already under way to complement the congestion relief this project will bring to the Utah County corridor.

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